

PASTORAL LETTER

OF HIS LORDSHIP, MSGR. A. PASCAL, O. M. I., D. D.,
BISHOP OF PRINCE ALBERT.

Albert, by the Grace of God and the Authority of the Holy Apostolic See, Bishop of Prince Albert.

To the Clergy and the Faithful of our diocese, greeting and benediction in the Lord.

DEARLY BELOVED BRETHREN:

Before leaving our diocese to pay our official and filial respects to the Supreme Father of Christendom, we wish to bring to your attention and enlist your hearty and generous co-operation in its solution, a problem which is of the greatest importance for the welfare of the Church in our diocese, and which has, for a long time occupied our earnest and prayerful thought. It is the problem of providing for the education of thoroughly Catholic teachers for our schools and of enabling our Catholic young men to fit themselves for their future careers by a course in higher education without any danger of compromising their Holy Faith or the integrity of their Christian morals.

The awful war just ended demonstrates, better than any words of ours, the dangers of merely secular education when not guided by truly Christian principles. It shows that intellectual development and modern inventions may be either a great blessing or great curse to mankind. It proves also the truth of the old claim of the Church that science fails to save and civilize the world, when divorced from religion and morality.

Never has there been a greater need of truly educated men than there is to-day. Never has there been a greater desire for, and appreciation of learning. Never have there been offered so many and so great opportunities for learning. Catholics have never been behind in the search for learning. In fact the Church has been, for ages, and is still the champion and custodian of secular knowledge, as well as of revealed truth. She has founded by far the greater number of universities in Europe. Out of one hundred and forty-eight universities in Europe, Catholics have founded one hundred and seventeen.

The words of Bishop O'Dwyer of Limerick apply to Canada as well as to Ireland: "What we want at the head of our popular movements are a few men of intellect and high culture, and throughout the country a large body of really educated men." What the country needs, and what the Church needs during these troubled times is able and sane leaders. What gives great leaders to a country? What develops great minds for great problems? It is higher education.

The population of Canada is over one third Catholic. The government is eight tenths non-Catholic. Non-Catholics have not a large numerical majority, and still, how massively and overwhelmingly non-Catholic is the Press, public opinion, and the atmosphere of the Dominion! In this fair province of ours, Catholics form twenty per cent of the population, and we have not a single member of Parliament at Ottawa, and only two or three in the Provincial House at Regina. We have only one Catholic judge. We have hardly twenty Catholic lawyers out of four hundred, only one Catholic professor out of thirty on the regular teaching staff at the provincial University. We have only four Catholic school inspectors out of forty-two, and no Catholic teacher on our provincial Normal School staffs.

Why are Catholics so strong numerically and so weak and insignificant in influence in this province? Why, if not chiefly on account of our neglect of higher education? Catholics have been satisfied to be hewers of wood and drawers of water. Catholics in this province have tilled the soil and built the railways, but to a great extent they have neglected higher education.

During the last few years, there has been a marked improvement in this respect but, unfortunately, little has been done for the Catholic education of the boys. Several convents have been opened in different parts of the province, some of which are doing secondary school work. Only two preparatory schools for boys are now being established in the southern part of the province, whilst nothing as yet has been done in this diocese. Nothing has even yet been done to make up for the lack of religious and moral training of the Catholic boys frequenting the provincial institutions of learning.

If we want the Church to wield influence in this country, if we want her to exercise her educative force, if we want her to fulfill her mission in society, we need men with intellectual power and genius for leadership. We need big minds to master big problems, to give inspiration and direction to their fellow-men; and the means to power, the means to influence, and the means to leadership is higher education.

To foster this higher education for our Catholic youth, two plans suggest themselves. One is to make use of and co-operate with the already existing state institutions of learning; the other, to establish an independent Catholic College somewhere in the diocese.

While the latter is the ideal plan from a Catholic standpoint, there are several obstacles militating against it, which seem to render it unfeasible. First, the founding of an efficient independent Catholic College which could compete with the state institutions would require a much larger amount of money than the Catholics can raise.

Secondly, such an independent Catholic College could not, for many years at least, give courses such as Law, Medicine, Engineering and Agriculture, and many Catholic young men therefore still would have to frequent the state institutions.

Thirdly, the establishment of two Catholic colleges in the southern part of the province would necessarily lessen the financial assistance that could be hoped for, whilst reducing the number of students available for another Catholic college.

Fourthly, it would, at present, prove extremely difficult to man this college with a highly trained and efficient staff.

Let us now consider the other plan, that of affiliation and co-operation with the state institutions of learning. These institutions, being non-Catholic, permit great liberty of thought and freedom in the expression of ideas, which would be dangerous for immature minds if left unguarded. The founders of the university have, with wise forethought, made provisions against these dangers. They have provided for the establishment of Church colleges in proximity to the university, and co-operating with it. Such colleges would be granted power to teach contentious subjects, such as history and philosophy, and thereby the danger to Faith would be greatly minimized, if not entirely eliminated. Such a college for Catholics in connection with the provincial university would provide a much needed religious, intellectual and social center for all Catholic students of the university, the Normal, and the other secondary schools at Saskatoon, and would foster harmony and mutual understanding between Catholics of different nationalities.

This plan, backed up, as it is, by the almost unlimited financial resources of the province, would assure economy in expense and increase efficiency by placing at the disposition of the Catholic college the library, equipment, and laboratories of the state institutions.

Another aspect of this plan is also worthy of consideration. Association of the Catholic students, under guidance and supervision, with non-Catholic students would tend to remove suspicion, bigotry and misunderstanding, and thereby open up larger avenues of success to our Catholic students.

Having weighed and compared for a long time these two different plans of meeting the needs of our Catholic youth pursuing higher studies, we have come to the conclusion that the second of these plans, namely the founding of a Catholic college in affiliation with the state university is at present the only feasible one from a financial point of view, whilst it meets our most pressing requirements. Therefore we have decided to take immediate steps for the establishment at Saskatoon of a Catholic college to serve as an intellectual and religious center for Catholic young men of the province attending the various state institutions of learning at that city.

To carry out this plan it will be necessary to raise a sum of approximately sixty thousand dollars, which must be contributed by those who have at heart the cause of higher Catholic education.

For the purpose of raising this amount, we hereby appoint the reverend pastors of the Cathedral at Prince Albert, of St. Paul's Church at Saskatoon, of the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes at North Battleford, and of St. Augustine's Church at Humboldt, a committee for the purpose of dividing among themselves, for canvassing purposes, the entire territory of the diocese and evolving an effective campaign of canvassing for the necessary funds, with power of associating with themselves as many of the clergy and laity as they may deem advisable or necessary for the purpose. We also direct the clergy and the two Catholic newspapers in the diocese to lend all assistance in their power to bring this campaign to a successful issue.

We appoint the above mentioned four pastors, together with one Catholic layman from each of their respective districts, as an advisory committee to assist the diocesan authorities in selecting a suitable site for the proposed institution, providing suitable buildings, selecting an efficient staff, evolving a satisfactory plan of affiliation with the provincial university, and providing for the special needs of different groups of Catholics in the province.

We appeal, dearly beloved Brethren, most earnestly to your well known generosity for the purpose of accomplishing this most important and necessary undertaking. We are confident that you realize fully that this enterprise is for the benefit of your own sons, that it is destined to place within their reach the highest opportunities in life without endangering their immortal souls. This undertaking is destined to promote unity and harmony between the various groups of Catholics, and to provide us with able, sane and efficient leaders to assist in guiding the destinies of both the Church and the State in our beloved country. Thus we are confident that this work will redound to the benefit of the individual, of the Church, and of the state.

In conclusion may we express the confident hope that, when we shall kneel at the feet of the Holy Father, this great undertaking shall have so far advanced that we may present it to him as the crowning work of our life and implore upon it and its promoters and benefactors his apostolic benediction.

Dated at Prince Albert on the Feast of St. Joseph, the nineteenth day of March, 1919.

+ALBERT, O. M. I.,

Bishop of Prince Albert.